



## Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

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Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
July 28, 2005

### **SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL SUPPORTS WHALE AVOIDANCE POLICY BY HAWAII SUPERFERRY**

During the fortieth meeting of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, council members voted in support of a policy submitted by Hawaii Superferry that is intended to help the ship avoid whales. At the meeting held on May 12, 2005 in Honolulu, Terry White, the council's commercial shipping representative and chief operating officer of Hawaii Superferry—who recused himself from voting on the measure—submitted the company's whale avoidance policy that was developed through recommendations made by the council.

At the council's previous meeting held in Kihei, Maui on March 17, 2005, the council passed a resolution (see attached) that outlined its recommendations for the ferry's procedures to avoid any interactions with humpback whales as the ship transited through sanctuary waters. The council recognized that the policy submitted in May meets the requirements of the resolution from the previous meeting and speaks to the minimum requirements for whale avoidance that they deemed to be appropriate, including reducing the ferry's speed while operating in waters less than 100 fathoms during the humpback whale season.

"The council members recognize that no policy will guarantee that a vessel will not interact directly with a whale, however we felt that these measures represent the best that can be done to avoid whales with the current available technology," stated Terry O'Halloran, council chair and whale-vessel interaction working group co-chair. He added, "At the meeting some council members expressed concern that the policy did not address mitigation measures for nighttime operations." The ferry is proposing to operate at night during one of its inter-island routes. Subsequently Hawaii Superferry has since proposed measures to address these concerns in its revised policy submitted to the SAC.

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Sanctuary manager, Naomi McIntosh said, "We're very glad that Hawaii Superferry was able to develop a whale avoidance policy that was acceptable to our advisory council. While we continue to be concerned about vessel-whale collisions, this policy marks an important step in our on-going collaboration with vessel operators to find workable solutions to this challenging issue."

Jeff Walters, sanctuary co-manager with the State of Hawaii's Department of Land and Natural Resources added, "Hawaii Superferry has made a commitment to avoid transiting through the sanctuary during whale season except when it's absolutely necessary for public safety. Furthermore, even when they must transit through the sanctuary, such as when sea conditions make it unsafe to transit across the north side of Molokai, the ship will avoid our most precious habitat areas around southwest Maui. These concessions are not trivial to their operations and it demonstrates the company's commitment to humpback whale conservation."

The council has focused a significant effort on addressing the potential threat of whale-vessel interactions in recent years. In September 2003 the council, with support from the sanctuary, hosted a workshop entitled *Management Needs to Minimize Vessel Collisions with Whales in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary and other National Marine Sanctuaries*. In conjunction with the workshop the council established a Whale-Vessel Interaction working group that includes council members as well as experts outside of the advisory council to continue addressing management needs for whale-vessel interactions.

Established in 1996, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council provides advice and recommendations on managing and protecting humpback whales. The council is composed of 16 government and 15 non-governmental representatives. Serving in a volunteer capacity, the advisory council represents a variety of local user groups, as well as the general public.

The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary is administered by a partnership of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program and the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources.

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NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program seeks to increase the public awareness of America's maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. Today, 13 national marine sanctuaries encompass more than 18,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources. The NMSP is conducting a sanctuary designation process to consider incorporating the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve into the National Marine Sanctuary System.

The Council is an advisory body to the Sanctuary Managers. The opinions and findings of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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On the Web:

National Marine Sanctuary Program - <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary -  
<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

HIHWNMS Advisory Council -

<http://www.hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov/sac/sac.html>